593 handling the potential conflict between father and son and the successive generations which they represent; these are mechanisms which preclude intimacy between the father and the son. The social statuses of father and son are not
593 852 585 permitted to overlap by their being participants in, or even present at, festive occasions, such as circumcision
•[831] and wedding parties, occasions which are marked by erotic poems and lewd songs. It would be "wrong" for a father to accompany his son to one of these parties. In the one instance that I did observe a father and son together at a wedding party, the Bedouins explained the rare occurrence by pointing out that this was the man's only son, and so he treated him "like a brother."

593 866 The Bedouins of al-Qasr recognize the aloofness of the father from the son and justify it as a training period to prepare the boy for the time when he will be on his own. One young man explained the underlying rationale of the father-son relationship in this way:

> There are different kinds of fathers. One wishes to make his son a man, to make his son self-dependent at an early age. Other fathers destroy the personalities of their sons. For instance, the first type of father gives his son the responsibility of selling something, or buying something, or of supervising a chore in his own place. But the second type of father is usually soft with his son; he doesn't depend on his son due to his young age. He is very cautious with him and will not send him anywhere, and if he does he will ask someone to look after him. Of course, the first type of father is good and the second type is bad.

6: Peters E-5 (1948-1950) 1965 MT9 Libyan Bedouin MT9
Cyrenaica

Chapter

7

*Aspects of the Family Among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica**

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Marriage and the Father-Son Relationship

When a marriage takes place among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica, a nuptial tent is set up some distance away from that of the groom's father. There is no particular significance about the nuptial tent itself, but it must be pitched at a distance so that the father "will not see it" — although, obviously, in a country of large level plains, it stands out conspicuously. This pretence that the tent remains unseen by the father is pushed to the point of his denying any knowledge of what is afoot. A middle-aged or elderly man with a family adopts a similar attitude to any marriage in which his son participates, as groom or as guest. An elder, the father of three unmarried sons (one of whom, in his late twenties, was known to be getting impatient about marriage), when I asked after his eldest son, insisted that he was away with the camels, although the son was conspicuous in a semicircle of young men encouraging a blindfolded maiden in the movements of her seductive dance outside a wedding tent in his full view. Prior to the wedding festivities, the

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Cases

584 Prior to the wedding festivities, the
593 father will have participated in negotiations, although even in these he will have remained silent, leaving an affine, as a rule, to arrange the details with the girl's father and his kinsmen. The father feigns aloofness from the start of negotiations until after the wedding celebrations have ended. Before inquiring into this seemingly odd behaviour, a few further details of marriage ceremonies need to be mentioned briefly.

585 The bride is carried to the nuptial tent on a camel, seated in a cagelike
342 structure placed on the camel's back, this canopy covered over with carpets
[492] and at least one long blanket — later to be used to divide her tent into male and female quarters — which constitute part of the goods given to a woman
[788] on marriage. On her arrival, while she is still seated in her canopy, the camel is led round the tent seven times by a small boy. She then descends and is hustled into the tent by a number of women who make a show of their attempts to conceal her from view. Inside the tent the bride is enclosed in one corner in a kind of cubicle partitioned off by a length of blanket.

585 In the meantime, the groom has affected to escape, but is "caught," while
[533] running away, by his fellows, who "compel" him to return to the nuptial tent,
• [831] to the accompaniment of their lewd songs telling of the sexual pleasures awaiting him. Much of this is horseplay, but the young men carry it out brazenly and the groom is required to show reluctance to continue with the ceremonies. His entry into the nuptial tent is marked by an expectant hush that falls over the crowd of men gathered, as they await the result of the virginity test the groom is about to perform, which he does by wrapping part of his toga round one of his fingers to pierce the hymen. Sharp shrieks from
[202] the bride give the signal that the test has been undertaken; not a stir moves the crowd until evidence of its success has been publicly displayed, which is given by the groom hoisting the blood-stained portion of the toga through the corner of the tent on a pole, followed by firing three shots from his rifle. Jubilantly, the men gathered fire volley after volley from their rifles just over the nuptial tent, and the seven-day celebrations begin.

585 A full descriptive account of a marriage, or many of the ritual details
589 woven into it need not be given here. What is included is intended to illus-
[593] trate certain relationships between father and son, and between one
[561] generation and another. In this connection two further points are appropriate. First, during the week of festival, young men gather outside the nuptial
[535] tent each night to encourage a maiden in her dancing, clapping their hands
[533] to the point of injury "so that we will have a wife soon." The celebrations belong to the bachelors, and they are the only ones to engage in the singing and hand clapping. It is they too who stop the bridal camel on its way to
[538] the nuptial tent to recite obscene rhymes to the bride, and they also shout
[831] their rather dubious consolations to the bride who, during the virginity test, crying out for her mother, is assured by them that the night holds promise
585 for her which her mother could never extend. The married men, particularly
602 the close senior agnates of the groom, stay away from it all, discussing mat-
521 ters unconnected with the affair.

her father takes, but in certain critical situations he can be relieved of choice if the interests of the group as a whole are at stake.

Political authority is the preserve of a corporation, and its exercise leads to invasion of a man's authority in the field of domestic relations. This does not mean, however, that discrete areas of authority do not remain with the father. In the tent his authority over his son is so overwhelming as to keep the son in almost complete subordination. The son is referred to as a slave, and in daily life he has to behave as one. He must obey every command, for, were he to rebel, he would find little or no support among his agnates, whatever the extent of the provocation. Retreat from his father is hardly an alternative, since, while his father is alive, he has no animals of his own, and to leave camp would only mean that he would have to move outside his group to seek employment elsewhere as a shepherd. If he did this he would forfeit status, and almost certainly cut himself off from property which would fall to him after his father's death. A man who "denies" his father looses too many privileges for the practice to become widespread.

Caught in this dilemma, a son's predicament is worsened by the fact that he cannot initiate marriage negotiations — to be able to do so requires some animals to offer a girl's father. Through his mother's brother he has the means of bringing pressure to bear on his father, but the latter can resist for years. Finally, a marriage is arranged for him. It is difficult to convey the yearning of young Bedouin for marriage. They discuss it among themselves *ad nauseam*. For the most part their talk is about the sexual aspect of marriage. Premarital sex relations are strictly controlled, and the movements of each young girl are carefully guarded because, if on the day of her marriage the test shows that she is not a virgin, she not only brings disgrace to her family, but the marriage may be revoked and her worth as a bride for another man seriously diminished. Nevertheless premarital relations do occur, if not between youths and maidens to any extent, between young men and married women.

The question still remains: why is marriage the occasion of such ebullient celebration? The formal authority a father exercises over his son changes little on marriage. Economically the son is still harnessed to the father. The latter still shouts his orders at him, and obedience remains unaltered. Any sign of an independent view on a matter is met with a gruff rebuff. If the marriage turns out to be disagreeable to the father, he has the authority — if not always the power — to break it. Marriage does not mean a change in the general mode of behaviour between the two; the legal relations remain unaltered, albeit modified in practice, as the married son matures in age. But marriage does mean the acquisition of rights and status previously denied a son. Henceforward, he has a domain of his own. This is high drama, indeed, for although every effort is made to give substance to the expressed view that "nothing has happened," for the first time in his life the son has seized publicly, amid the jubilations of his fellows, a status which hitherto was the possession of the father.

band is required to take gifts to his mother-in-law in recognition of the fact that she nourished his wife as an infant (the literal meaning of the word used for this gift is "milk"). A return visit is made and gifts are given to the daughter. When the first child is born an animal is presented by the affines, and if the child is a male, the gift may be several sheep, or even a few camels if the father-in-law is very wealthy. Formal exchange of gifts continue, but, in addition, informal transfers are made. Moreover, if relations between a man and his father-in-law develop favourably, it is not uncommon for a young husband, during the early years of marriage, to move away from his father and pitch his tent alongside that of his father-in-law. Marriage gives a son affinal relations of his own. Affinity can alleviate the dead weight of paternal authority.

It is suggested that the crisis the marriage of a son assumes for a father is the shift it entails in the distribution of authority. This is borne out by other details in the marriage ceremony referred to earlier. Ordinarily, young men dare not sing within earshot of their senior agnates. Far from allowing obscenities, agnates of the ascending generation would not allow even a mention of women to be made by young men, in their presence. In a group consisting of young men and an agnate, I chanced to use the noun for woman and immediately my tent was cleared of all but the senior agnate. At a wedding the young men revel in their lewd songs and shout their obscenities for all to hear. The senior agnates stand aside and make a show of ignoring the proceedings. And well they may, for each marriage is a challenge to the exclusive authority they have enjoyed; each nuptial tent is an invasion of the domain of which they have been undisputed masters. Marriage is the only occasion when the men of one generation can clap and sing their defiance of an older one, and give warning of the changes which must be accommodated however great the pretence that nothing has happened.

Marriage ceremonies dramatise the clash between adjacent generations over the distribution of certain forms of authority. If this authority is as overwhelming as has been suggested, and if it is so deeply resented, how is it that life is endurable for juniors? Relationships between junior and senior agnates are so restrictive that they almost amount to what Professor Fortes has suggested I view as a form of avoidance relationships. Juniors must always defer, they must obey commands promptly, they serve their seniors, they must accept a lead when it is given and the restrictions on conversations exclude all reference to women, marriage or sex. These are not simply a set of general guides for behaviour, they are rigidly applied rules, deviation from which is countered with rebuke or greater severity. It would appear from this

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many African societies is that wealth is transferred. Obviously, in societies where the rules of exogamy compel a dispersion of links outside a man's own clan, what is involved in this transfer of wealth cannot be sociologically similar to one in which marriage to the first cousin on either side is permitted.

582 of agnation on the members of a corporate group and give it a taproot of
583 diversity whence it derives its strength, and which makes of it "the one body,"
613 conspicuous, in comparison with other societies, as the corporate group
602 *par excellence*.

The Sister's Son-Mother's Brother Relationship

128 Previously the mode of relationships associated with agnation and affinity have been briefly discussed. In order to appreciate the effects of parallel-cousin marriage, some remarks concerning the sister's son-mother's brother
604 set of relationships must be included here. Bedouin contrast the mother's
[174] brother with the father's brother; their sayings and proverbs afford a wealth of verbal documentation on the contrast. With the mother's brother a man enjoys all the freedoms he is denied in his relationships with his father
• [831] and father's brother. He is permitted to joke with him; they indulge in exchanges of obscenities. When the sister's son wishes to marry, he is permitted to discuss the matter with his mother's brother and can urge him to intercede with his father on his behalf. Two men thus related are readily recognised in the camps, because in their acts they are required to show affection by displays of innocent horseplay, pranks or mild practical jokes. Small boys pursue their mother's brother, feign to kick or strike him, and he takes it all in good part.

The external aspects of this behaviour is deceptive. Joking of this sort creates the image in which the relationships are conceived; what is equally striking in it is its compulsiveness. Obviously, mature men are not always in the mood to be teased, but if they are, they must respond appropriately. Their relationships are unmistakably onerous. This remark applies not only to the external forms of their behaviour, but also to the favours a man is
[602] permitted to ask of his mother's brother. A brief amplification will make the point clear. Demands can be made of agnates, but only in situations of serious contingency. Day-to-day needs are met, not by appeals to the rights of agnation, but from the expectations linked to the mother's brother. If these expectations are withheld, the sister's son may be left in a quandary. In-
604 terestingly, in the records of homicides I gathered, three (in the con-
682 temporary population) were concerned with the killings of mother's brothers by sister's sons. Homicide within this field of relationship is difficult to comprehend unless it is appreciated that expectations are as compulsive in the daily life and the general well-being of people as are the rights and duties associated with agnation.

604 These general remarks apply to the relationships irrespective of the lineage
613 origin of the mother's brother. The similarity ends there, since the nature of the expectations, their urgency at any given moment and the kind of favours which are granted vary with the group identity of the mother's
[428] brother. A mother's brother who is a member of ego's corporate group may be expected to give the sister's son small quantities of flour, favour him in all

462 424 them or any innate aptitude for them; this insistence is an index of the jealousy with which she is prepared to guard her rights. Each right derived from this or that small task is an extension of her control over the male.

462 424 252 The force and significance of this control is, perhaps, best seen in a woman's right to cook. At marriage a woman must have at least the minimum of cooking utensils, and one of the rights a man acquires in a woman is that she cooks for him. This is something a man cannot do for himself. [593] Therefore, when a man ill-treats his wife or threatens her with divorce, she can retaliate by refusing to cook, or leave the tent altogether to return to her father. A man bereft of this service is in a very sorry plight indeed. The legal dominance of the male, seemingly autocratic, is reduced at every point by the control a woman exercises through her exclusive right to perform tasks. The limits to the area of her coercive powers are significant. 562 They are confined almost wholly to domestic relationships. Legally, women suffer such disabilities that they are almost of the status of minors; in reality, their day-to-day living is far from intolerable because they are able to control males over a wide field of relationships.

462 424 231 Men, excluded in the main from domestic duties around the tent, perform tasks to which their legal rights are tied. While women have access to wells for water used by human beings, the transport of larger quantities of water over longer distances, requiring the use of camels, is a task which falls to the men. Watering of animals is done by men. Only they can slaughter the animals for food. The meat of an animal slaughtered by a woman is not "free," in a ritual sense, for human consumption. In an extremity only, a woman can, in effect, kill an animal, but the knife which cuts its throat must be held in a male hand, even if it is the hand of a very small boy. 462 The exploitation of the land is also the male prerogative. They [424] plough and sow the grain; incidental help may be provided by wives working [241] alongside their husbands during the early part of reaping, but the main reaping is done entirely by men. Transportation of grain to the mounds is also carried out by men, and it is they only who have access to the grain stores when quantities are withdrawn for family use. Sheep-shearing is [236] carried out entirely by males,[10] the fleeces are stacked by them and the [432] distribution and sales of these is directed by the male head of the tent.

Additional to these major tasks which males undertake are a number of minor ones. Men sew strips of cotton together to make clothes for both sexes. They also make rope of grass, albeit in a desultory sort of way, by [834] twisting together the strands between the palms of the hands. A number of [342] other tasks fall to the men by virtue of the fact that the sexes are separated in the tent by a divider of blanket material, which may be taken down when only members of the elementary family are about, but which is put

[461] [533] [538] [831] [10] This work is reserved for the younger men and takes the form of a festival during which lewd songs are sung and poems with obscene themes or references are recited loudly and within the hearing of elders, in a manner not dissimilar to the behaviour of bachelors at a wedding.